

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 AMMAN 04392 301044Z

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S E C R E T AMMAN 4392

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E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR, JO, SY, PLO, MO

SUBJECT: TALK WITH PRIME MINISTER ON MIDDLE EAST DEVELOPMENTS

1. EVENING JUNE 29 ON SOCIAL OCCASION HAD OPPORTUNITY TO TALK WITH PRIME MINISTER RIFAI AT SOME LENGTH. WE WILL BE FOLLOWING UP AGAIN ON JUNE 30.

2. PRIME MINISTER OPENED BY NOTING THAT HE HAD PAID A "SECRET" VISIT TO DAMASCUS ON FRIDAY, JUNE 27. (I HAD HEARD ABOUT THIS VISIT FROM A RELIABLE SOURCE WHO SAW RIFAI LEAVE.) RIFAI SAID THE VISIT HAD BEEN AT HIS REQUEST AND THAT HE HAD TALKED WITH KHADDAM ABOUT HIS WASHINGTON TRIP, BUT KHADDAM WOULD BE COMING HERE OFFICIALLY TO DEBRIEF JORDANIANS IN NEXT FEW DAYS.

3. PRINCIPAL PURPOSE OF THE TRIP WAS TO INFORM THE SYRIANS OF AN APPROACH MADE TO THE JORDANIANS BY THE PLO THROUGH MOROCCANS. RIFAI FLEW TO LONDON LAST WEEK TO MEET WITH AHMED BEN SOUDA ABOUT THIS SUBJECT. JORDANIANS HAD PLAYED ON SYRIAN IRRITATION WITH PLO BY FLYING TO DAMASCUS IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING PLO APPROACH AND TELLING SYRIANS ALL ABOUT WHAT HAD OCCURRED. RIFAI INDICATED THERE HAD BEEN SOME SPECIFIC DETAILS RAISED WITH HIM BY BEN SOULD ON WHICH HE WOULD BRIEF ME LATER. RIFAI SAID THE SYRIANS ACTED IN PREDICTABLE FASHION, BOTH GRATEFUL FOR FILLING THEM IN ON PLO END-RUN AND APPARENTLY
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PAGE 02 AMMAN 04392 301044Z

IRRITATED AT PLO FOR JUMPING OUT OF SYRIAN CHANNEL

FOR DEALING WITH JORDANIANS OVER QUESTION OF
FUTURE RELATIONSHIPS. FROM WHAT RIFAI TELLS ME
IT APPEARS ARAFAT WANTS AGAIN TO TRY TO MAKE SOME DIRECT
CONTACT WITH JORDANIANS.

4. RIFAI SAYS THE PLO IS FINDING ITSELF IN INCREASINGLY
DIFFICULT POSITION FROM ALL THAT HE CAN
JUDGE. ARAFAT SEEMS TO BE TRYING FOR A NEW OPENING
WITH THE JORDANIANS IN AN EFFORT TO INSURE THAT WHATEVER
BENEFITS CAN BE DERIVED FROM AN IMPROVED RELATIONSHIP
WITH JORDAN ARE MADE AVAILABLE TO HIM.
WE CANNOT SPECULATE ON WHAT ARAFAT MIGHT ACTUALLY
SEE IN THIS SORT OF OPENING AND CAN ONLY CONCLUDE
THAT IN SOME PRELIMINARY WAY PERHAPS ARAFAT WANTS
AGAIN TO ENTER INTO DISCUSSIONS WITH THE JORDANIANS
LOOKING TOWARD SOME JOINT OR COMBINED EFFORT IN
FUTURE NEGOTIATIONS.

5. RIFAI SAID THAT KHADDAM WAS NOT COMPLIMENTARY
ABOUT HIS WASHINGTON VISIT. HE TOLD RIFAI THERE
WAS REALLY NOTHING VERY NEW IN WASHINGTON AND THAT
HE CAME AWAY FEELING THAT THE AMERICANS HAD REALLY
NO IDEA ABOUT WHERE THEY WERE TO BE GOING IN THE
FUTURE. RIFAI HIMSELF INDICATED INCREASED CONCERN
THAT THE US HAD BECOME AN EMASCULATED GIANT IN THE
MIDDLE EAST AND THAT WE WERE ONLY PROVING TO THE
WORLD WE DID NOT HAVE THE WILL OR CAPACITY TO INFLUENCE
THE SITUATION. WE THEN DISCUSSED AT
LENGTH ISRAELI INTRANSIGENCE AND RIFAI'S FAVORITE
THEME THAT IF THE US REALLY WANTED TO DO SOMETHING
IT COULD DO SO WITH THE ISRAELIS; IF WE
PUT ON THE HEAT, THEY WOULD HAVE TO FALL
INTO LINE. WHILE HE IS INCREASINGLY ACCEPTING
OF THE FACT THAT THE PROBLEM IS MUCH MORE COMPLEX,
HE RETURNS TO HIS OLD BASIC THEMES ON THESE
OCCASIONS. IT IS CLEAR FROM ALL RIFAI HAD TO SAY
THAT SYRIANS APPRECIATED THE OPPORTUNITY TO
EXCHANGE VIEWS, BUT ARE NOT TELLING THEIR ARAB
FRIENDS AND ASSOCIATES THAT THEY CAME AWAY FROM
WASHINGTON WITH MUCH HOPE IN MIND FOR THE FUTURE.

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SECRET

PAGE 03 AMMAN 04392 301044Z

YM RECOMMEND DEPARTMENT PASS CAIRO, DAMASCUS, BEIRUT
AND RABAT.
PICKERING

SECRET

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